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## CONSERVATION POLICY IN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your winter conference.

These are exciting times in Washington, especially in the areas of environmental quality protection and natural resources conservation.

President Carter has put a new focus on these two important areas. In his environmental message to Congress last May he laid out the issues clearly. He said:

"Americans long thought that nature could take care of itself -- or that, if it did not, the consequences were somebody else's problem. As we know now, that assumption was wrong. None of us is a stranger to environmental problems."

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Remarks of Assistant Secretary of Agriculture M. Rupert Cutler delivered by Dr. Gordon Guyer, Assistant Dean of College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, at the Michigan Forestry and Park Association Annual Conference, East Lansing, Michigan, February 1, 1978.

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He continued: "My Administration is committed to a policy of effective stewardship of our public lands and natural resources. That policy includes conservation, multiple use of resources, and reluctance to disrupt natural ecosystems. At a time when it has become apparent that we can no longer afford the waste and misuses of any natural resources, the need for these steps is clear."

So, new directions have been set. The Department of Agriculture is in the forefront of the move to transform this new leadership into improved programs and action "on the ground."

Secretary Bergland reinforced the President's message in a memo to all USDA agencies. He said: "The Department of Agriculture will play an important role in the implementation of many of the actions raised in the message. I want you to know that the policy set forth in this message has my complete endorsement. You should make sure that your key officials, both here in Washington and in field locations, receive copies of the President's message and are fully aware of the President's and my interest in these matters."

As one of the first steps in improving resource management nationwide, I made a commitment to require full and real coordination of the many natural resource-related programs throughout the Department. One of my primary goals



as assistant secretary is to instill a new environmental ethic into all USDA programs, not only national forest management, but all its forestry, soil, water, pest management, land use, and other natural resource programs.

Air, water, and other environmental components do not recognize man's artificial ownership boundaries. Therefore, we cannot let our environmental concern end at Federal land boundaries, and state and local resource agencies likewise must concern themselves with Federal land management and water-use policies. All the parts of resource management must be considered as parts of a whole. Our forest and park lands may be in different ownerships, but they remain environmentally interdependent. I pledge my support for resource management decisionmaking closely coordinated among all levels of government.

Two relatively new Federal forestry laws underscore this holistic view -- the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 and the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

The Resources Planning Act came first. It calls for periodic assessments of all the renewable forest and range resources in the Nation, under all forms of ownership. Never before have we had such a comprehensive base of resource information upon which Federal agencies, States, and private



owners can build long-range programs.

The act requires the Forest Service to present a long-range program of its activities to the President and the Congress every five years. This program is then to be the focal point of the budget process.

The Congress used the program to develop the 1978 budget. The Department considered the program in developing its 1979 budget recommendations. The RPA program is now established as an important basis for funding the Forest Service. However, thorough and objective justification for every dollar in every program is still required. RPA stipulates annual evaluation of Forest Service accomplishments, and the administration is using zero-base budgeting each fiscal year. Incidentally, the Soil Conservation Service now has a similar and complementary authority for long-range planning, called the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act, or RCA, signed by President Carter on November 18.

The National Forest Management Act built on RPA. It calls for long-range interdisciplinary planning and continuous public involvement. Through RPA and the National Forest Management Act, we have an unshakable commitment to public involvement in all programs. It is real public involvement -- as much as improved funding and well-founded long-range goals

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-- that will make our programs truly responsive to the needs of the people. And, it is this public involvement that will bring unification of all forestry programs.

The philosophy of the Carter administration is that all lands should be used to their best advantage. Public lands must provide those products or services to which private lands are not well-suited, such as wilderness and dispersed recreation. But, as public lands accommodate more amenity uses, we must recognize that private lands will have to produce more commodities, such as timber, livestock forages, and developed recreation.

The private, non-industrial forest lands have tremendous potential. With proper management, they can help meet resource needs, contribute to the economy and enhance the environment. But, to more fully realize this potential, we must strengthen our programs to help private land owners. And we intend to do this, through SCS, Extension programs, and ASCS economic incentive efforts as well as through the Forest Service.

Another step in the unification of American forestry was taken when the President, in his environmental message, called upon the Department of Agriculture to make a comprehensive study of all cooperative forestry programs. For the first time in memory, a President has placed State and private



forestry programs on an equal footing with public forest management.

We completed the study with a report entitled, "The Federal Role in the Conservation and Management of Private Non-industrial Forest Lands." It is an excellent example of inter-agency teamwork: the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, and two components of our new Science and Education Administration, formerly known as the Extension Service and the Cooperative State Research Service, were the main cooperators. The Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Environmental Protection Agency also were involved.

Two concerns emerged as we wrote that report. First of all, we need, as soon as possible, a system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all cooperative forestry programs. Second, we must develop the information needed to design, implement, and direct cooperative forestry programs more effectively.

The report identified four general approaches to achieving cooperative forestry objectives: education, technical assistance, incentives and State planning. We are encouraging each State forester to consider State forestry planning as an integral part of the RPA assessment and program. Such plans will permit States to select and



emphasize the approaches that work best for them. Planning also will result in better coordination of State, Federal, and private efforts toward specific forestry goals.

The mechanism for coordinating the delivery of private forestry programs is the forestry planning committee of the Department of Agriculture. Recent meetings of the committee have led to the drafting of a new USDA interagency agreement on forestry. The agreement will provide, among other items, agency role definition for the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Science and Education Administration, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and Farmers Home Administration. It is a blueprint for coordination and efficient cooperation which I insisted be drawn to minimize overlapping and conflicting USDA forestry programs.

Renewed efforts also are being made to expand the forestry planning committee at the State level. In some States, including Michigan, the Committee is operating effectively, but the concept still must be introduced in others. Programs can be fully effective only if all of the involved people at the "doing level" are thinking and working together. We are urging the State committees to involve all concerned agencies and interest groups, to jointly plan programs, and to be sure everyone is kept informed of plans, needs, and opportunities. And I have instructed USDA

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personnel to be fully responsive participants at the State and local levels.

One example of an issue which involves both the State and the Department of Agriculture is the Pere Marquette River. As you know, President Carter, in his environmental message, recommended that segments of eight rivers, including the Pere Marquette, be added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The recommendation, which is still pending in Congress, was for 66.4 miles of the Pere Marquette. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has recommended to the Natural Resources Commission that the river be designated under the Michigan Natural Rivers Act and that the Michigan delegation seek Federal designation as well. Such a dual designation would not be unique. We already have components of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System that are also designated in a state system.

Earlier, I mentioned two major forestry laws that gave new life and the promise of better funding to all Forest Service programs. Now, Congress is considering additional legislation that would clarify and strengthen Forest Service State and private forestry and research authorities under the Resources Planning Act. Congressman Jim Weaver of Oregon, chairman of the forest subcommittee of the House Agriculture

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Committee, has introduced bills to achieve this.

One bill (H.R. 8020) is designed to streamline and expand present Forest Service state and private forestry programs, and to infuse a new environmental ethic into public programs directed toward the private sector. It would emphasize and encourage multiple use management on non-industrial private forest lands and would broaden and strengthen Federal assistance in a number of areas, including urban forestry -- a subject of special interest to the MFPA.

The second bill (H.R. 8021) would deal with research on a similar all-encompassing basis, and provide new competitive grant authority.

A third bill (H.R. 8022) would give new support for extension forestry. Having spent a part of my career as an extension forester, I know how important it is to get resource information to all the owners and users of our forests, and that is Chairman Weaver's expressed intention here. In the meantime, we are reorganizing internally to strengthen our extension forestry programs.

The Department of Agriculture has been known, since its creation in Abraham Lincoln's time, as "the people's" department. But, over the years, it has been looked at by the urban population as exclusively a farmers' department.

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Secretary Bergland intends to make it a department for "all the people." This intent has led to a strong concern for the people in our towns and cities, as well as farmers.

We are aware that three-fourths of the United States population, about 150 million people, live in urban places. Some 125 million people live in metropolitan areas. Sixty-six million of these people are virtually locked in the city because of low income. The only chance these folks have of ever coming in touch with nature is within the urban setting.

In 1972, the Cooperative Forest Management Act was amended, authorizing the Department of Agriculture to render technical assistance in urban areas in cooperation with the state forestry agencies, but no funds were provided.

In 1977, Congressman Richmond of New York and a number of his colleagues introduced an urban trees bill which would provide grants to urban areas. These grants would share the cost of arboriculture with privately-contributed funds and public funds in different proportions. There has been no action on this bill.

Since 1972, a number of States, in anticipation of funding under the Cooperative Forest Management Act, have started modest urban forestry programs on their own, and a few States have sizable, innovative programs.

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For Fiscal Year 1978, the Congress appropriated, for the first time, \$3.5 million for an urban forestry program and \$2.5 million for a Dutch elm disease control and tree utilization program.

In the urban forestry program, matching cost-share funds will be channeled through the State forestry agencies on the basis of an approved plan and the number of urban places in the State. The program will be administered to encourage the use of services of urban forestry consultants and others from the private sector.

The Dutch elm disease program will make available educational programs and information to local governments, landowners, and individual homeowners on the history, incidence, severity, and control of Dutch elm disease and on utilization of dead and dying elm trees. In selected areas, Dutch elm disease control and elm tree utilization will be demonstrated.

Both programs will be implemented through teamwork. In urban forestry, the Forest Service, state forestry agencies, and Cooperative Extension Services will work with research and the private sector to serve local governments, private organizations, and individuals. In the Dutch elm disease program, the Forest Service and the Cooperative Extension

program of USDA's Science and Education Administration will cooperate with many public and private organizations to serve the public.

The Department of Agriculture has also developed a pest management policy that meets today's concerns for both resource development and environmental sensitivity. The policy states that we will "develop, practice, and encourage the use of integrated pest management methods, systems, and strategies that are practical, effective and energy-efficient." We will "seek adequate protection against significant pests with the least hazard to man, his possessions, wildlife and the natural environment. Additional natural controls and selective measures to achieve these goals will be developed and adopted as rapidly as possible."

In discussing the Department's role in natural resources, I recognize your interest in President Carter's desire to reorganize certain segments of the Federal Government. Various options for reorganizing natural resources and environmental agencies were published in the December 19 issue of the Federal Register. Comments on the options were requested by January 14, but the deadline has been extended until February 14. Since natural resources occur on private as well as public lands, we in the Department recognize that we are already heavily involved in natural resources, far beyond the Forest Service. And, we feel that

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there is considerable merit in the option that would produce a Department of Agriculture and Renewable Resources.

In closing, I'd like to emphasize one point. Forest resources do not recognize ownership boundaries for jurisdictional boundaries. While, by the nature of things, the Federal Government often must play a leadership role, resource programs can be effective and efficient only when all interested parties -- Federal agencies, State and local governments, universities, professional associations, and private industry and individuals -- all pull together in the same direction. That is the goal of this administration, and the Department of Agriculture. Let's work toward accomplishing it together.

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